onto or over the bread component of the sandwich so that sandwich garnish from each cavity is deposited onto two different portions or halves of the bread component. The bread component may be placed over and adjacent the cavities with the bread component being inverted with the assembly tool while maintaining the bread component adjacent the assembly tool to cause the garnish and/or condiment to be deposited onto the bread component.

[0017] In another embodiment of the invention, a sandwich filling is heated and/or a bread component is optionally heated separately from the sandwich filling. A condiment and/or a sandwich garnish may be placed on the tool prior to or while (or even after) the filling and/or the bread component is heated. Thereafter, the bread component, whether heated or not, is placed on top of the condiment and sandwich garnish combination. "Heating" is intended to have a very broad meaning and includes any method for cooking or increasing the temperature of a food. Thus, "heating" includes, but is not limited to, for example, grilling, broiling, steaming, microwaving, flash steaming, toasting, frying, conduction, convection, sautéing, boiling, poaching and searing.

[0018] Sandwich preparation in accordance with the invention can include placing sandwich garnish and/or condiment directly on a piece of paper, a wrapper that is eventually used to contain the sandwich, the container used to hold the completed sandwich when it is presented to the consumer, or preferably a tool adapted for assembling and applying garnishes.

[0019] In another aspect of the invention, after an order for a sandwich is taken from a customer, a bread component is heated for less than about one minute in response to the order in a first heating device, and/or a sandwich filling is heated in a second device. Preferably, the sandwich filling is heated from 40° F. or less to 150° F. or more while the bread component is being heated, typically rapidly toasted in less than thirty (30) seconds, in response to the order.

[0020] In another embodiment, an order for a sandwich is taken from a customer and a preassembled sandwich filling is heated from 40° F. or less to 150° F. or more within twenty seconds in response to the order. The preassembled sandwich filling may be a single or multiple food component and may have at least one slice or amount of a first foodstuff, which may be sliced, diced, shredded, grated, chopped, liquid and a quantity of a second foodstuff. For purposes of the patent, a foodstuff which contains a mixture of components is considered to be a single foodstuff when the garnishes are usually pre-mixed rather than being separate components which are added separately to a sandwich. Examples of this include chili; sausage, which may be made from several different animals, beer or wine, cheese, and spices; vegetable patties, which may be made from several different grains, small chunks of vegetables, and small chunks of cheese; and coated or breaded patties, which typically has a meat or meat-substitute and a bread coating. In a preferred embodiment, the preassembled sandwich filling includes a separator, typically in the form of a sheet or film, which makes the filling easier to handle. The separator may be a good conductor of heat, and can be a foil, parchment paper or polymer sheet or film material, for example.

[0021] In another aspect of the invention, a sandwich filling and a bread component are heated. Prior to or while the filling and bread component are heating, a first sandwich garnish is combined with a second sandwich garnish. Next the heated bread component is placed on top of the sandwich garnish combination. In a preferred aspect, a hamburger is assembled using a clamshell container, which can be used to package the completed hamburger.

[0022] In another embodiment, an order for a sandwich is taken from a customer and a bread component is placed onto a pre-heated, preassembled sandwich filling. The filling is made from two or more foodstuffs. Next the bread component and filling combination are inverted.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0023] **FIG. 1** is a perspective view of a sandwich assembly tool in accordance with the invention;

[0024] **FIG. 2** is a cross-sectional view of the sandwich assembly tool taken along lines **2-2** of **FIG. 1**;

[0025] **FIG. 3** is a side elevation view of the sandwich assembly tool of **FIG. 1**;

[0026] **FIGS. 4-5** are perspective views of garnishes placed in the sandwich assembly tool of **FIG. 1** in accordance with the method of the present invention;

[0027] **FIGS. 6-7** are cross-sectional views of condiment and garnish contained in the sandwich assembly tool of **FIG. 1**;

[0028] **FIG. 8** is a perspective view of a bread component placed onto the tool of **FIG. 7**, ready for inversion;

[0029] **FIGS. 9-10** are cross-sectional views of the tool of **FIGS. 1-8** inverted on a bread roll with garnish and condiment therein and being deposited onto the bread component;

[0030] **FIG. 11** is a cross-sectional view of the bread component, garnish and condiments from **FIG. 10** after the tool has been removed;

[0031] **FIG. 12** is a cross-sectional view of the sandwich after the filling has been applied over the garnish and condiments in accordance with the method of the present invention;

[0032] **FIG. 12A** is a cross-sectional view of the sandwich of **FIG. 12** after the filling has been wedged against the roll hinge;

[0033] **FIG. 13** is a cross-sectional view of the sandwich of **FIG. 12** in an open position after the separator sheet has been removed;

[0034] **FIG. 14** is a perspective view of the completed, closed sandwich;

[0035] **FIGS. 15-17** are cross-sectional views of the sandwich of **FIG. 14** being wrapped in a wrapper;

[0036] **FIG. 18** is a perspective view of another embodiment of a sandwich assembly tool in accordance with the invention;

[0037] **FIG. 19** is a cross-sectional view of the sandwich assembly tool of **FIG. 18** taken along lines **19-19** of **FIG. 18**;

[0038] **FIG. 20** is a perspective view of still another embodiment of a sandwich assembly tool in accordance with the invention;